NEWSPAPER

NAFEM/89 CONVENTION

NAFEM/89: The spot for new equipment

Story, schedule begin on page F17

Dallas blazes comeback trail

Focus section follows page 32

EDITOR'S CORNER

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...n/Page F3

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Nation's
Restaurant News®

The Weekly Newspaper of the Food-Service Industry

Vol. 23, No. 39 | Published every Monday by Lebhar-Friedman Inc.; $3 a copy, $29.50 a year | September 25, 1989

MUFSO ROUNDUP

MUFSO: Beyond the basics

Operators hail philosophy of excellence

By Rick Telberg

NEW ORLEANS — Some of the savviest operators in the nation are embracing a management philosophy that challenges them to go further than mere mastery of the fundamentals of food service to something best termed "beyond the basics."

"It's not the size of the chain that determines who wins or loses; it's just being the best at it," declared Herman Cain, president of Godfather's Pizza, to a rousing ovation at the 30th annual Multi-Unit Food Service Operators Leadership Conference here.

Fresh calls for excellence in operations and a focus on a single marketing theme became rallying cries for the executives at MUFSO, which is sponsored by Nation's Restaurant News.

Previous MUFSO conferences have yielded themes of niche marketing, customer service, the labor crisis, and political threats. But this year's meeting seemed marked by an attitude among operators that — believing they had mastered the principles of production, pricing and positioning — they would find it necessary to change faster and do more than simply execute "the basics."

"The basics," said MUFSO attendee Chuck Boppell, president of Hudson's Grills in Southern California, "just aren't good enough anymore.

*(See **MUFSO**, page 128)*

EAT, EAR awards
Operators target mupple market
MUFSO coverage/Page 7

NRN Photo

Joe Lee, president of General Mills' restaurant division, thanks MUFSO audience after winning crown.

Joe Lee wins vote as Operator of Year

By Rick Van Warner

NEW ORLEANS — Joe Lee, the methodical, self-made operations specialist largely responsible for engineering Red Lobster's development from a five-unit operation into a dominant national seafood dinner-house chain, was crowned Operator of the Year at a banquet during the MUFSO conference here.

Beaming as he stepped up to the podium to accept the coveted award, Lee quipped, "I'm not dead yet either," referring to an earlier remark by Pioneer of the Year honoree Joe Baum.

But characteristically, Lee downplayed his role in the chain's success and seized the opportunity to praise others.

"This award is really special, but please join me in applauding the people that do the work that I get credit for," he said, rattling off a long list of General Mills Restaurant staffers past and present and then asking all General Mills audience members to stand.

"It's 75,000 people who really did it," he added, referring to the number of employees in the company's Orlando, Fla.-

*(See **LEE**, page 129)*

Domino's plan sparks uproar

Monaghan posts sale sign

By Milford Prewitt

NEW ORLEANS — News that Tom Monaghan had hung a "for sale" sign on his Domino's Pizza empire swept through the MUFSO meeting like a flash flood over a Louisiana levee as conference-goers speculated about possible suitors, the price the chain might fetch, and industry ramifications.

Elsewhere, Domino's franchisees were stunned by Monaghan's announcement that he may cash in his chips to devote more time to the numerous charitable and religious causes he champions.

In a letter to the company's franchisees and employees addressed "Dear Dominoids," Monaghan stressed the idea of selling was only "a possibility at this point." Nevertheless, he revealed anguish over his inability to give Domino's and his charity work equal and undivided devotion, an untenable situation he said he sought to avoid when he appointed Dave Black president in June.

"It is not fair to give divided attention to Domino's Pizza," he wrote.

Several executives convened here for the four-day leadership conference flung wise cracks and expressed amazement at the news. Others, mainly competitors, were reserved and guarded about the implications of a change in ownership in Domino's, which, with 5,100 units, operates the nation's second-largest pizza chain.

"There's a lot of growth left in the segment, and that's certainly an important part of our strategy," said Steven S.

*(See **DOMINO'S**, page 129)*

Tom Monaghan

Pizza Hut wages war against McD in ad blitz
Page 4

NRN Photo

Joe Baum

Industry salutes Joe Baum

By Bill Carlino

NEW ORLEANS — In a stirring, heartfelt tribute, industry heavyweights saluted Joe Baum, the 35-year restaurant veteran whose innovations have influenced generations of operators and scores of restaurants nationwide.

The 69-year old entrepreneur, whose New York landmark restaurant creations include the fabled Four Seasons, La Fonda Del Sol, Forum of the XII Caesars, and Trattoria, was honored as Nation's Restaurant News' Pioneer of the Year at the MUFSO awards banquet here.

In the emotional highlight

*(See **BAUM**, page 129)*

MORE MUFSO HIGHLIGHTS NEXT WEEK

INSIDE NRN

News

Stuart Anderson's leads TV ad awards 7
Operators target rich, growing Muppie market 7
Domino's program to recruit minority franchisees 22
Checkers Drive-In wins copycat suit over Jiffy Burger . 94
Hurst seeks sea lice supply to launch new dish 96
Washington State U. begins work on Todd Hall 96
Pocahontas backs effort to save eagle 98
General Mills taps Red Lobster prexy for senior VP . . . 98
Benfield named NACUFS prexy 99
Vesley memorial fund to benefit cancer care 99
Western Sizzlin set for Canadian growth 126

Focus

Section follows page 32
Cover Story/NAFEM/89 meets in Dallas F1
Bernstein/Bureaucratic stupidity: cooking oil saga F3
Viewpoint/How to make the most of your meetings . . . F4
Viewpoint/Right equipment can solve labor problems . F8
Cover Story/NAFEM/89 to meet in Dallas F17, F20
Cover Story/Task force for purchasing managers . . . F20
Cover Story/NAFEM/89 Schedule of Events F25
Cover Story/Dallas blazes comeback trail F26
Cover Story/Dallas Dining Guide F28, F30
Cover Story/Texans get taste of Lone Star wines . . . F30
Live entertainment remedies operators' blues . . . F34, F36
Serving home cooking off the beaten path F38
Brunch buffets boom in the burbs F40
Sanford D'Amato's home is his restaurant F45
Boulevard Inn: 43 years and solid as a rock F45, F46
French chef leaves mark on San Francisco F48
1940s-style Silver Diner plots D.C.-area growth F52

Columns

Patterson/Ice machine placement key to long life 16
Martin/Prime time for Plantation's early-bird patrons . . 18

Food

Fabricant/Menu descriptions vs. classic codification 11
What's Hot/Milwaukee 11
NRN Food News Digest 11

Marketing

Vail resort promos boost off-season business 12
NRN Marketing Digest 12
Ad Watch/Texas Department of Commerce 12

Financial

Chart House to go public in $3.8M share offering 14
NRN Fact File 14
Food Price Outlook 14
NRN Financial Digest 14
Stock table 130

Features

Letters F3,F13,F15
Quotables F4
Product News 92,102,106, 127
Calendar of EventsF57,F58
People on the Move: . . . .
Suppliers 101
Restaurant Openings 105
Book Digest 107, 109
Classified 119-126

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For subscription problems, call (212) 697-2165 or (212) 697-2166.

For other business, call (212) 371-9400 and extension:

Newsroom 285
Display advertising 404
Classified advertising 492

Subscription rate: food-service operators and wholesalers-distributors, one year, $29.50, two years, $49.50; auxiliary (consultants, architects, designers, manufacturers, suppliers, and schools) and all others, $59.

Nation's Restaurant News (ISSN 0028-0518) is published weekly, every Monday except the last Monday in December, by Lebhar-Friedman Inc., 425 Park Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to: Subscription Department, Nation's Restaurant News, 305 Madison Ave., Suite 535, New York, N.Y. 10165-0079.

For change of address, please write Subscription Department, Nation's Restaurant News, 305 Madison Ave., Suite 535, New York, N.Y. 10165-0079. Six weeks' notice is requested. Please send old and new address and zip codes. If possible, include mailing label.

Vol. 23, No. 39

Sept. 25, 1989

NEWS DIGEST

Dunkin' agrees to let suitors see its books

RANDOLPH, Mass. — After bitterly opposing a takeover attempt for several months, Dunkin' Donuts has agreed to provide several suitors with confidential information about the segment-leading doughnut chain.

Among the parties that will be supplied with the information is Kingsbridge Capital, a partnership of Cara Operations, a Toronto-based food-service company, and George Mann, a Toronto businessman. Dunkin' has rejected Kingsbridge's $45-per-share acquisition offer, which put the doughnut maker in play.

Dunkin' would not reveal the identities of the other suitors.

California gets tougher on drinking and driving

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California lawmakers are getting tougher on drinking drivers: Beginning Jan. 1, the state's legal blood alcohol level will drop from .10 percent to .08 percent.

The lower blood alcohol standard, which the governor signed into law, is among the strictest in the nation.

Traffic accidents involving drunk drivers claimed the lives of more than 2,200 people in California last year, state officials reported.

Burger King adds tacos in tie-in with hot sauce

HOUSTON — Burger King has expanded its arsenal of promotional products by adding breakfast tacos made with a locally popular retail brand of salsa.

The tacos, which are served two at a time for $1.29, are being spotlighted in a co-operative advertising program with Pace, the sauce supplier. Newspaper inserts note that Pace is made in San Antonio "by folks who know what picante sauce should taste like." Attached to the ads are discount coupons for Pace picante sauce as well as the tacos.

The approach is similar to the one taken by Burger King a few years ago in cooperation with Wolf-brand Chili, whose signature product was used to top the fast feeder's short-lived chili burger.

The new breakfast tacos are made with eggs, cheese, and breakfast meats. McDonald's, the only fast-food chain larger than Burger King, is also experimenting with Southwestern breakfast specialties.

Church's pays $80K fine to cease INS probe

WASHINGTON — Church's Fried Chicken has agreed to pay an $80,700 federal fine for hiring undocumented workers, halting an Immigration and Naturalization Services investigation into the chain's hiring methods, the U.S. Justice Department said.

The agreement gives Popeyes Famous Fried Chicken time to correct improper hiring practices at Church's, which Popeyes acquired earlier this year.

Investigations had uncovered missing and improper forms at 97 Church's outlets involving some 2,900 workers, the Justice Department reported. Initially, the INS sought fines in excess of $620,000.

La Côte Basque's operator plans to spin off a bistro

NEW YORK — Jean-Jacques Rachou, chef-owner of the swank La Côte Basque here, has disclosed plans to convert the former site of his Le Festival seafood restaurant into a lower-priced bistro to be called Le Pistou.

The new place will be more affordable than Le Côte Basque, a classic French restaurant where per-person dinner checks average more than $60. The average dinner tab at Le Festival was $65. Le Pistou's entrées will reportedly range in price from $20 to $30.

Many high-end restaurateurs have been opening moderately priced spin-offs to combat a vexing price sensitivity among consumers.

Schlotzsky's helps rescue James Coney Island

HOUSTON — Schlotzsky's has struck an agreement with James Coney Island, the 14-unit chain of hot-dog-and-chili stands operating under bankruptcy protection, to help the local chain restructure.

Schlotzsky's chairman, Thomas C. Thompson, said his Austin, Texas-based company, which operates the 215-unit sandwich chain, plans to expand James Coney Island through franchising.

The 66-year-old local hot-dog chain, which is operated by the Papadakis family, was in arrears for about $6.8 million. Principals James Papadakis and his brother-in-law, Louis Servos, attributed their financial woes to poor investments outside of the restaurant trade.

Dayton-Hudson plans two new take-out food cocepts

MINNEAPOLIS — The Dayton-Hudson department-store chain is planning a rapid rollout of two new in-store feeding concepts that cater to demands for take-home fast food.

Eight Chickery outlets, which feature char-broiled chicken, and seven Marketplace Foods, a gourmet-styled soup and sandwich shop, are planned for the next two years, said John Lovelace, food-service chief at the company.

Two experimental Chickery units averaged $1,000 in annual sales per square foot, he said.

Under fire for racism, restaurateur admits blacks

NORTH AUGUSTA, S.C. — Restaurateur Bruce Salter, facing FBI investigation, a state lawsuit, and public criticism for refusing to serve blacks at his dining establishment and bar here has finally opened the door to minorities.

The Atlanta Journal & Constitution reported that black attorney George Hill Jr. dined at Salter's restaurant, called the Buffalo Room, and extracted a pledge from the operator to stop his practice of discriminating.

Hill was quoted as saying Salter's bitterness toward blacks stems from an offensive racial incident that dates back 20 years.

Salter refused to comment, criticizing widespread news reports for being distorted.

Filmmaker enlists Mootz for entertainment projects

SAN FRANCISCO — Kimpton Restaurant Group vice president Nancy J. Mootz is leaving that company to help filmmaker George Lucas create complexes combining special-effects-oriented attractions, theme restaurants, and retail outlets.

Mootz said Lucas' new company, Skywalker Hospitality, is currently negotiating a lease for its first "Entertainment Marketplace," which could open in San Francisco by late 1990. The San Francisco center will feature three to five restaurants, she said.

While Lucas has teamed up with the Disney organization in recent years to develop attractions for some of its properties, Mootz stressed that the entertainment marketplaces "won't be [mini] theme parks."

Mootz, a three-year Kimpco veteran, was most recently involved in the development of Postrio, and the creation of the company's first free-standing restaurant, Splendido's, which is expected to open late this year.

Biloxi's White Pillars throws in the napkin

BILOXI, Miss. — The landmark White Pillars restaurant here has ceased operations, denying Gulf Coast residents another taste of the baked-eggplant dish that drew crowds to the 625-seat place during most of its 36 years.

However, traffic had slowed in recent years, according to local observers. They note that the Log House, another stalwart of the local dining scene, shut its doors two weeks beforehand.

White Pillars, whose signature dish was Eggplant Josephine, featured 400 banquet seats.

FINANCIAL NEWS

Chart House to go public in 3.8M share offering

By Rajan Chaudhry

SOLANA BEACH, Calif. — Chart House Enterprises Inc. and its stockholders expect to reap about $47.8 million from the company's initial public offering of 3.8 million common shares, according to Securities and Exchange Commission filings.

The company — which operates 59 Chart House restaurants, one Peohe's, and 13 Paradise Bakery restaurants and franchises 12 Paradise Bakery's — said it will use its net proceeds, about $34.4 million, to cut its long-term debt and capitalized lease obligations by more than 40 percent, to $45.6 million.

Chart House's existing investors — primarily two partnerships managed by The First Boston Corp. — stand to collect about $12.6 million for 1 million shares. The partnerships purchased their stock at an average price of $1.44 per share, according to the company's prospectus, compared with the public offering price of $13.50 per share.

After the offering, the partnerships will control about 32 percent of outstanding common stock, down from more than 69 percent.

The company's 15 officers and directors, who together control about one-third of the company's stock, are selling no shares, according to the filing. After the offerings they will hold a 21-percent stake.

For the six months ended June 30, 1989, Chart House posted an 11-percent rise in net income, to $2.1 million, on a 3-percent fall in revenues, to $69.7 million.

The drop in sales reflects the loss of revenue from the company's sale of its Luther's Bar-B-Q restaurant operations in December.

The company said it intends to focus its expansion activities on the development of Chart House restaurants and that it plans to open four to six in 1990.

Chart House restaurants are full-service casual dinner houses offering seafood, steaks and chicken. Many offer elaborate salad and seafood bars.

Although Chart House is a chain concept, its strategy is to choose unique sites, often on waterfronts and in historic buildings. As a result, its units range in size from 91 seats to 388 seats, with an average capacity of 172, and its per-unit sales volumes range from $600,000 to $6.1 million, with an average annual volume of $2.2 million in 1988. Per-person checks average $20, excluding alcohol, which is typically less than 25 percent of sales.

The first Chart House restaurant opened in Aspen, Colo., in 1961. In 1983 the company merged with a subsidiary of Godfather's Pizza Inc., taking the name Diversifoods. The Pillsbury Co. acquired Diversifoods in 1985 and through a tender offer, liquidated Chart House and transferred the company's assets to a new subsidiary, CHI.

In 1985 Chart House management and affiliates of First Boston acquired the chain from Pillsbury. One year later, in separate deals, Chart House bought 16 Luther's Bar-B-Q restaurants and four Cork 'N Cleaver restaurants from Pillsbury. Both operations have since been sold.

In 1987 the company bought the assets of Paradise Bakery, a mall concept that features cookies, muffins, croissants, and light meals, including soup, salads and sandwiches.

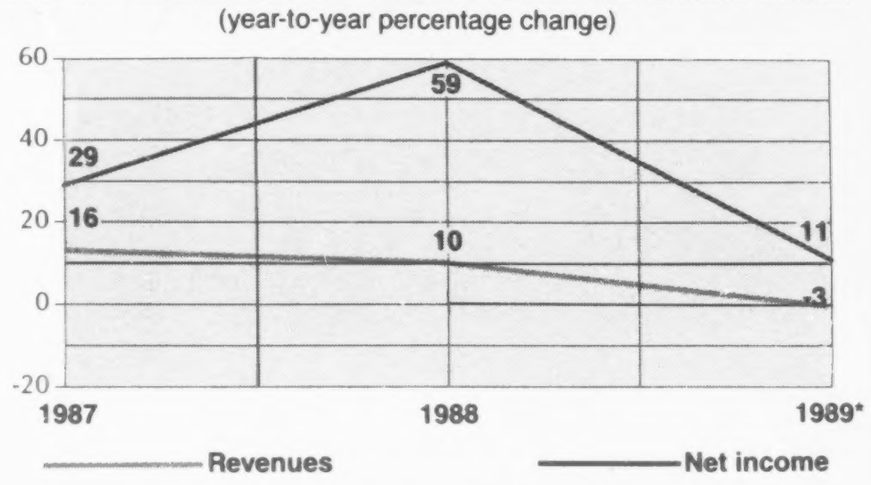
Paradise Bakery stores range from 600 square feet to 3,700 square feet, with average annual sales of $460,000. The average transaction for company-owned stores is $2.25.

Through its Paradise Bakery unit, the company also operates a wholesale bakery in Carlsbad, which supplies baked goods to Chart House as well as to hotels, food-service distributors, and other third-party accounts.

Last year the company opened a Peohe's restaurant in Coronado. The restaurant, which overlooks the San Diego Bay and highlights seafood, is similar to a Chart House but features a slightly broader and more expensive menu.

CHARTING CHART HOUSES' PERFORMANCE

(year-to-year percentage change)



Source: Company reports. *Through first half ended June 30. Reflects sale of Luther's Bar-B-Q.

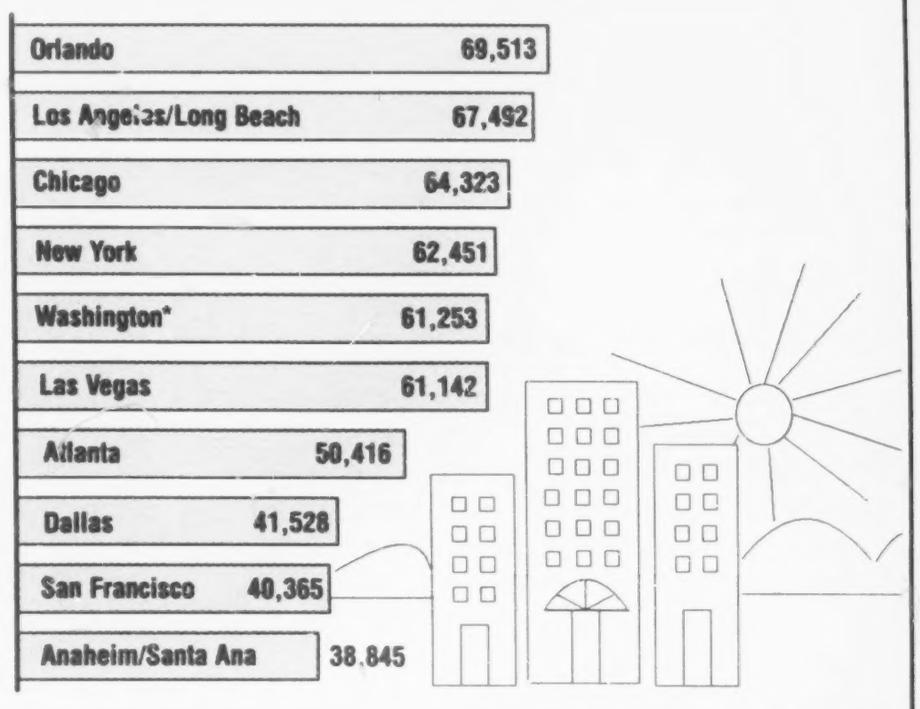
Chart House's existing investors stand to collect about $12.6 million for 1 million shares.

FACT FILE

A look at the statistics shaping the industry

ORLANDO: NO MICKEY MOUSE HOTEL TOWN

(no. of hotel rooms per city)



Source: Laventhol & Horwath

*includes portions of Maryland and Virginia

NRN FINANCIAL DIGEST

Circle K cancels sale plans

PHOENIX, Ariz. — Four months after putting itself on the block, Circle K Corp., the nation's second-largest convenience store operator, said it has received no bids and is no longer for sale.

Circle K also said its board had voted to suspend the company's quarterly common stock dividend.

The company decided to end its search for a buyer upon recommendation of special adviser Wasserstein, Perella & Co., a merchant banking concern, it said.

A bid from chairman and 7.1-percent owner Carl Eller was expected but never materialized, and the company's adviser reportedly told Circle K that a leveraged buyout couldn't be financed at a fair price because of the weak high yield securities market and the company's falling profitability.

In its first fiscal quarter ended July 31, the company's profits fell 39 percent, to $7.6 million, despite a 25-percent rise in revenue, to $1 billion.

Karcher profits suffer decline

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Carl Karcher Enterprises Inc., operator of the Carl's Jr. hamburger chain, said net income fell 16 percent, to $18.9 million, for its second quarter ended Aug. 14, on a sales gain of 18 percent, to $122.8 million.

The company blamed the results on competitive discounting and high acquisition and opening-related costs.

It also said it has increased its bank borrowings and reduced its marketable securities portfolio to finance a repurchasing and retiring of about 25 percent of outstanding shares in the third quarter of 1989.

For the latest six months, the company's net income fell 16 percent, to $10.4 million, on a year-to-year rise in sales of 19 percent, to $271.7 million.

Pantera's gets waiver extension

DALLAS — Pantera's Corp., cash-strapped operator of the nation's No. 4 pizza chain, said it has negotiated an extension, through the end of the month, of its waiver from its secured lenders.

The company said the waiver extends the $4.6 million in interest and principle payments due on the secured debt.

As a condition of the waiver, Pantera's said secured lenders have placed restrictions upon the payment of other debt by the company, which will force it to defer payment of interest due Sept. 1 on its subordinated convertible debentures. The company said it can defer payment on the debentures for 30 days without acceleration.

Pantera's also said it intends to continue its negotiations with equity investors to raise up to $25 million during the waiver period.

Earlier this month the company announced that it had received a letter of interest from an investment group that stated the group's intent to buy up to $20 million of Pantera's common stock at $2 to $2.25 a share.

FOOD PRICE OUTLOOK

Bacon prices may rise by year's end

The United States has the largest stock of **pork bellies** in years, which would normally hold a lid on **bacon** prices. However, belly prices have started to move up. Already they are at last year's level. The reason? President Bush is looking favorably at food aid to Poland.

And rumor has it that Poland wants pork bellies and beef. If the president agrees, expect higher bacon prices by the end of the year. Speculation has already pushed belly prices up about three or four cents a pound.

At the same time, the price of **canned Polish ham** has gone up, and further increases are anticipated. One of the reasons is the reduced number of hams coming into this country. Although Poland needs the dollars, food at home is an even greater problem, so many of the hogs that would normally provide hams for export are being consumed domestically.

There's plenty of **canned tuna** available. The domestic pack is up nearly 15 percent over last year's tab. Exports, on the other hand, have fallen slightly. Net supplies are up, and off list discounts reflect it . . . The **red-salmon** pack from Alaska is more than double last year's. So is **pink**, although last year was one of the lowest on record. Prices should drop a bit within the next two months.

Prices of both **vegetable** and **animal fats** remain well below last year's levels. About the only exception is **coconut oil**, which is running at or above last year's level. **Palm oil**, hit hard by processors cutting back as the result of consumers' fear of saturated fats, is down nearly 20 percent from last year's supply.

— Patt Patterson

TRENDS

Good try, buddy, but put blame where it belongs

A gambler claimed an Atlantic City casino should have stopped him from playing and losing because, he said, the operators knew he was drunk. He sued the house, but when the case went to a federal court in New Jersey, he was told he had no legitimate claim.

Keeping a tab on sales of non-alcoholic beer

Importers and producers of non-alcoholic beer, led by Sibra Products, which imports Moussy, are considering the formation of a trade association. The group would promote sales of the unique category and monitor sales reports. Both Moussy and rival Clausthaler claim to be the nation's best-selling imported NA beer.

Bar fun: Computer trivia joins mini basketball

The miniature basketball game, which requires patrons to shoot as many hoops as possible in a limited time, has been a crowd puller since its innovation less than two years ago. Now it's been joined by a more exclusive, more cerebral event, computer trivia.

Patrons use a computer to compete in a test of knowledge against patrons in the same room or competitors in other bars. The game, offered on an exclusive basis in certain cities, is packing them in at places like Houlihan's 56th Street in New York; Cheers West in Tacoma, Wash.; the Holiday Inn, Stamford, Conn.; and Bridget Foy's in Philadelphia. Foy's won the first national tournament in March.

Promotional juices flow in crowd-grabbing promos

Beer and spirits firms are staging a variety of promotional contests aimed at pleasing people and boosting sales. Here's a rundown. Bacardi and Coke: sweepstakes offering free weekend trips to Improv clubs in Chicago, L.A., and N.Y.C. Stroh's Light sponsors a Light Knight sweeps, top prize a trip for four to Germany. Coors Extra Gold: sweepstakes to select 12 people for a junket to Hollywood, where they'll be extras in a Coors commercial. Southern Comfort: Second Annual Finger Flick Football tournament, regional winners compete in national play-off, and overall champion gets two tickets to Super Bowl XXIV.

Groups unite to promote wine, fight prohibitionists

The Wine Institute of California has launched the National Wine Coalition to promote and educate Americans about wine and to combat the growing power of neo-prohibitionist movements.

Jerry Vorpohl, who'll head the coalition, said Americans are being assaulted by warning labels, signs, and unsubstantiated claims by reformers. The coalition, he said, will publicize the values and pleasures of wine.

Calif. wines on upswing while overall volume dips

Shipments of California varietal wines improved by 15 percent in 1988, while imported wine declined almost 9 percent, according to Impact Data Bank. The California upsurge was sparked by continuing demand for premium table wines.

Jug wine sales fell as consumers shifted to higher-priced varietals. Imported sparkling wine shipments fell 6.2 percent while domestic sparkles were off 2.7 percent.

Cooler sales aren't dead; just look at the figures

While the excitement over coolers may have chilled in recent years, the category is still alive and kicking. After an inevitable shakeout, the key players — Seagram and Gallo — are still innovating and promoting heavily. Seagram will spend about $12 million to promote its lines this year, and Gallo is reported budgeting $15 million for Bartles & Jaymes.

Wine coolers now account for almost 20 percent of all wine consumption in the United States, about 50 percent more than all sales of imported wines.

WINE ENTERING U.S. DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS
(millions of nine-liter cases)

Type	1987	1988	Percent Change 1987-1988
Table	142.9	144.0	0.9%
Dessert	15.1	14.1	– 6.6%
Vermouth	2.6	2.4	– 8.6%
Sparkling	18.5	17.8	– 3.8%
Special Natural	10.5	9.3	–11.3%
Imported Specialty[1]	4.6	1.3	–72.2%
Total	194.0	188.8	– 2.7%

[1]Imported fruit wines and wine specialties (includes sangria and fruit-flavored wines)
Source: Impact Databank

FOCUS | OPINION

Nation's Restaurant News

is published by
LEBHAR-FRIEDMAN INC.
425 Park Ave., New York, NY 10022
212 371-9400
Subscription Services, ext. 379 or 419
Cable Address: LEBHAFRIED
Panafax: 212 838-9487

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Publisher of Nation's Restaurant News, Discount Store News, National Home Center News, Drug Store News, Accounting Today, Chain Store Age Executive (with Shopping Center Age), *APPAREL merchandising*. Affiliates: Business Guides Inc., Lebhar-Friedman Books; Inside Retailing (Newsletter); Chain Store Age News, Japan; Largo Music Inc.

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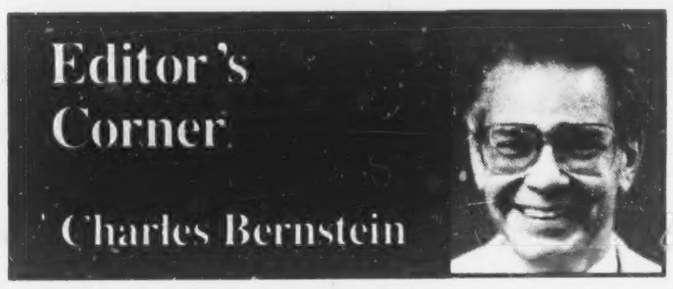
Bureaucratic stupidity: cooking oil saga

Should restaurant cooking oils be subject to a state sales tax?

The state of Missouri argued yes, to the tune of $3 million allegedly owed annually by restaurants throughout the state. Kentucky Fried Chicken's Missouri units, led by Marshall Scott Enterprises of St. Louis and its president, C. Marshall Scott, insisted that such a tax would represent double taxation for the same thing, since a sales tax already was being paid when chicken was sold to customers.



This landmark case, which has been debated in Missouri for the last six years, is a prime example of the bureaucratic nonsense that is assailing the food-service industry at the state and federal levels. Unfortunately, the emphasis is on collecting revenues at any cost, not on being fair to the primarily small-business people who run restaurants and whose livelihoods are at stake.

What is noteworthy about this case and what sets an example for beleaguered restaurateurs throughout the country is that through sheer persistence and guts, Scott and others fought the state. After losing repeated bouts with bureaucratic-minded officials, the State Legislature, and the courts, they finally won in a 7-0 Missouri Supreme Court decision. Similar double-sales taxes are still pending in other states.

Carl Degen, executive vice president of the Missouri Restaurant Association, pressed the case on behalf of KFC and all 3,000 of the association's member restaurants.

The bureaucratic mess started in 1983, when the Missouri Department of Revenues decided it would be a brilliant idea to collect a sales tax on cooking oil, salad oil, and other vegetable oils. Degen and Scott, representing numerous fast feeders that were major cooking-oil users, told then-department director Richard A. King that the tax was ridiculous and must be rescinded.

King agreed not to collect the tax but never drafted a specific regulation. In 1985 a new revenue director decided to collect the tax. It became a double whammy when the director notified Scott not only that he would be liable for current and future such sales taxes, but also that he owed $11,000 in "unpaid" taxes on the cooking oils for the past two years. Other fast feeders throughout the state were billed similar amounts.

By this time King, who understood the absurdity of the double-taxation measures and of the efforts to collect back taxes, had a private law practice. At Degen's request, King promptly requested a judicial administrative hearing on the matter, placing a temporary halt to the collection process.

Meanwhile, Degen pursued legislative amendments to block the sales tax in the State Senate and House. The Senate passed an amendment, but the House adjourned without approving it. Future legislative actions proved futile.

Then the state's position was upheld in an administrative hearing. Undaunted, Scott and Degen had King take the case directly to the State Supreme Court. They were jubilant when it unanimously ruled in their favor.

That ruling appears final, as any attempted state appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court presumably would not be heard.

The state was fully prepared to assess thousands of dollars in interest and penalties on the "unpaid taxes" against Scott and other Missouri food-service operators if it won the case. As it is, some restaurants that paid under coercion are now owed refunds plus interest.

One report of the State Supreme Court's ruling aptly depicted the decision as "telling state tax collectors to butt out of restaurant kitchens."

In his brief to the court, King warned that if restaurants were forced to pay taxes on cooking oil discarded after being used to fry chicken or potatoes, they also might face sales taxes on kitchen waste, such as unusable chicken parts or cabbage cores.

But the court ruled that the state's tax collectors should not be concerned about whether food items wind up on customers' plates. "Actually measuring the amount of material physically remaining in the final product is neither feasible nor possible," the court said. "Only a portion of the potatoes end up as finished product. Chicken trimmings are consigned to the garbage. The same is true for the component parts of the salad."

Legalities aside, the restaurant industry's victory against the Missouri bureaucracy and against overwhelming odds should be an inspiration to all restaurateurs who feel threatened by the endless barrage of government regulations.

LETTERS

Restaurant patrons want value for their dollar

Editor, NRN:

I've just read the story "Chicago's Le Prince closes after high prices chill sales," which tells of Swissôtel's management opinion that they had "a poor understanding of Chicago consumers, who balked at paying $100 per person for dinner."

Oh, yeah. Right. No one in Chicago pays $100 per person for dinner.

You bet they do, in droves. I can name least a dozen restaurants with that type of pricetag that do very well, but they have at least one thing Le Prince never had: value for the money.

When people drive to Le France, 45 minutes or more from the Loop, they get great food and great service; the same is true of Carlos. Ambria pleases many people for that amount of money, but they have an elegant restaurant in Lincoln Park and they're no-nonsense when it comes down to great food and service. Jackie's, Yoshi's, Gordon, Avanzare, The Palm, Printers Row . . .

What did you get at Le Prince? I ate there once; it was at least $100 per person and it *wasn't worth it*. Le Prince was located in a dungeon, or so it seemed.

One had to negotiate a long escalator, walk past a coffee shop, and then what? It had strange waiters. We had one who said, after I ordered appetizers, "I'll be back! Quick like a bunny!"

But these Swiss guys figured that if they showed up with a menu "drafted" by the "renowned French chef Louis Outhier," they'd make a killing.

Well, they didn't and now they insult 8 million/ Chicagoans by merely saying "We didn't succeed because there aren't enough people who will pay that much in the area," and that's a lot of crap. They will when it's worth it.

Good riddance, folks. I hope the people who come back to your restaurant read all your comments and now won't come to your hotel.

— **Andy Yoelin**
Chicago

You're never too old or experienced to work

Editor, NRN:

It is ironic that I sit down to write you a letter and at the same time read your Editor's Corner column about the general condition of the available labor pool for the hospitality industry.

I find those two students' comments about the abilities of the recruiters on the money.

Here is another scenario for you to digest. Maybe with your clout, companies will face up to the fact that employee selection is critical to success.

Having reached the age of 49, I face the hard truth: I am almost unemployable in this industry. Seeking a career opportunity with 27 years' experience and a successful track record to back up my skills is a frightening experience.

Every major company whose ad I answered for managers to join the team has been a turndown. One company even stated it wanted young people.

I can outwork, outthink, outhustle any young person in this industry. But at 49 I find no one will talk to me at all.

Personnel executives who read my résumé don't know what they are reading. When I was associated with Prime Motor Inns, I needed to know how to read a résumé and interview people for management positions.

To my credit, many of the people I hired are still with the company 10 years later — good employee selection on my part.

How can an industry where everyone agrees labor is a crisis that is upon us and will be with us for the foreseeable future pass up experienced individuals such as me without the benefit of an interview?

Companies big and small need to address their employees in their personnel departments to improve the skills and judgments about whom they will hire and whom they will not.

As for me, I will keep sending résumés, knowing that someone will recognize and hire an experienced, energetic and successful individual like me.

Thanks for listening, and maybe you can nudge all those recruiters to wake up and smell the coffee.

Forty-nine but not over the hill.

— **Anthony V. Caselnova**
Jonathan's Restaurant
Hasbrouck Heights, N.J.